

HB 5301 An Act Concerning Opioid Analgesic Prescriptions Issued to Minors

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, members of the Committee on Children, thank you for this opportunity to express concerns about this bill.

My name is Dr. Elsa Stone, I am a retired pediatrician, a past president of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and member of the Board of Governors of the New Haven County Medical Association.

The seriousness of the problem posed by the epidemic of opioid abuse that is afflicting our teens and young adults demands a solution, and the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics looks forward to working with the Committee on Children and the Legislature towards finding solutions. We speak in opposition to the current bill, however, as it does not appear to address the problem in any substantive way.

The vast majority of opioid prescriptions are not written in a pediatrician's office. And those that are, are prescribed with parental consent. The vast majority are prescribed in the context of emergencies and surgeries, settings which are excluded in this bill. The process outlined in the bill to be followed in the rare instance that a pediatrician did feel it was appropriate to give a child some pain medication for a day or 2 following an injury is logical, well-intentioned, but cumbersome, and does not address the very real problem of access to opioids prescribed to others. I suspect as a result some children who might benefit from a short course of pain medication would be under-treated.

By addressing only persons under 18 years of age, it ignores that large number of young adults ages 19-25 who also fall prey to substance abuse.

This bill also does not address how most teens begin their exposure to these drugs: raiding their parents' and friends' medicine cabinets. The problem of diversion of opioids from their original purpose is the most significant abuse, and we would offer our expertise to fashion substitute language that would support efforts across all prescribers and age groups to provide much needed education to the recipients of these prescriptions as to the addictive properties of these drugs, the very real dangers of keeping them beyond their purpose, and the necessity of disposing of them properly.